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Maranao, voice, and diathesis

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As most anyone who investigates the morphosyntax of the Austronesian languages of the Philippines and its environs will agree, there is both an overabundance of terms and a lack of consensus among its practitioners. This essay proposes DIATHESIS instead of *voice* as a blanket term for the type of morphosyntax found in these languages. The discussion begins with a vignette involving how Maranao came to be known in the Russosphere as the standard-bearer language with the most voice forms. The discussion then describes a distinction between *voice* and *diathesis* in the early-1970s literature and going back to the Greek grammarians. I propose that *diathesis*, under the original Greek definition, is our best alternative to the array of terms in Austronesianist morphosyntax.

As a graduate student in the early 1990s, I was assigned to read an article that discusses Maranao in the journal *Language*. One might guess that this publication was McKaughan (1962): arguably the most widely distributed publication on that language to date. As I was finishing up my MA degree, my adviser at the time, Richard Brecht, handed me an offprint of an article that he co-wrote with Leonard Babby, who ended up being my PhD adviser and who assigned this paper in one of his own seminars; it briefly mentions Maranao (Babby & Brecht 1975:365), citing another paper that devotes a section to Maranao and identifies the data in (1a–d) as coming from that language.[1]

(1) a. S<om>ombaliʔ so mamaʔ sa karabao ko maior.
        kills   man   buffalo   for   mayor
        'Man kills buffalo for mayor.'

     b. Sombaliʔ-in o mamaʔ so karabao ko maior.
        is.killed   man   buffalo   for   mayor
        'Buffalo is killed by man for mayor.'

     c. Sombaliʔ-an o mamaʔ so maior sa karabao.
        kills   man   mayor   buffalo
        'Mayor, it is he for whom (subject!) man kills buffalo.'

     d. I-sombaliʔ o mamaʔ so gelat sa karabao.
        kills   man   knife   buffalo
        'Knife, it is it using which (subject!) man kills buffalo.'
        (Melʹčuk & Xolodovič 1970:120–121 [parentheses and exclamation points as in original])

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[1] Angle brackets, added in (1a) and (2a), demarcate an infix within its base. Hyphens were also added in (1b–d) and (2b–d). The following special abbreviations are also used below in (3a–b). ACC: accusative case, F: feminine gender, INST: instrumental case, M: masculine gender, NOM: nominative case, and SG: singular number.

The interlinear glosses in (1a–d) are scanty; the free translations, rather stilted. This is because of the Russian in which the article is written.[2] Because Mel'čuk & Xolodovič do not cite any source for their Maranao section, these examples might have had to remain as such, were it not for the examples in (2a–d), two of which are identical—and the other two very nearly so—to those in (1a–d), respectively.[3]

(2) a.   S<om>ombaliʔ so mamaʔ sa karabao ko maior.
          'The man will butcher carabao for the mayor.'
          (McKaughan 1962:50 [= (1a)])

     b.   Sombaliʔ-in o mamaʔ so karabao.
          'The carabao is the thing that the man butchers.'
          (McKaughan 1962:48 [≈ (1b)])

     c.   Sombaliʔ-an o mamaʔ so maior sa karabao.
          'It is for the mayor that the man butchers the carabao.'
          (McKaughan 1962:48 [= (1c)])

     d.   I-sombaliʔ o mamaʔ so gelat ko karabao.
          'It is with the knife that the man butchers the carabao.'
          (McKaughan 1962:48 [≈ (1d)])

The apparent breach of citation etiquette aside, this incident could prove fortuitous in light of the terms *zalog* 'voice' and *diateza* 'diathesis' as redefined by Mel'čuk & Xolodovič, about which more below.

As Quakenbush (2003:17–18) writes, the term *focus*, traditionally used in the Philippines to describe the alternations such as that of the initial word in (1a–d) and (2a–d) above, has led to difficulties especially when linguists outside of the Austronesian fold try to read our work. Quakenbush recommends *voice* instead.[4] "While 'voice' may have previously implied a close correspondence to the active/passive construction in English and other Indo-European languages," Quakenbush argues, "such is no longer the case. More recent analyses have broadened the term 'voice' to refer to active/antipassive alternations in ergative languages, involving a valency-reduction of a type clearly different from that found in European languages." By contrast, Reid & Liao (2004:433) flatly reject voice as the explanation for such alternations. The affixes on the verbs as in (1) and (2), they write, are not "voice inflection"—implied, incidentally, by the title of McKaughan (1958)—because these "are not

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2   The Romanization used for the original Cyrillic is that used by North American Slavists; it differs, however, from the Library of Congress (LC) transliteration method, used by many western libraries. The journal title, *Narody Azii i Afriki* 'peoples of Asia and Africa', fortunately for the current purposes, is transliterated the same under both systems. In the LC system, the article's title appears as "K teorii grammaticheskogo zaloga (Opredelenie. Ischislenie)." The first author, who has taken up residence in Canada and publishes in Roman-alphabet languages, spells his name as <Igor [sic] Mel'čuk>. Nonetheless, the LC's name-authority headings list him as <Mel'chuk, Igor' [sic] Aleksandrovich>; the heading for the second author (no longer living) is <Kholodovich, A. A.>.
3   I thank Daniel Kaufman for verifying the acceptability of all of (1a–d). In (1b) the person for whom the animal is being butchered is mentioned; in (2b), trivially, not. According to the speaker of Maranao whom Kaufman consulted, *sa karabao* in (1d) translates as indefinite '*a* water buffalo', whereas *ko karabao* in (2d) is best rendered in English as definite '*the* water buffalo'.
4   I find it interesting that, as Blust (2002:63) observes, McKaughan (1962:48) uses quotation marks around the word *voice* in its first mention, suggesting that McKaughan was not fully at ease with its use. See also Kroeger (this volume) for related discussion.

inflectional but derivational, in that they cannot freely occur on all verbs, do not freely commute with one another as in a voice-marking system, and are typically maintained in nominalizations and other derivational processes." Reid & Liao go on to group such verbal affixes with other affixes, all derivational, that encode causative, distributive, stative, and aspectual meanings (2004:453). The crux of Reid & Liao's argument seems to be that these affixes do not encode voice inflection because they are not inflectional. I am willing to concede that point; still, I don't see a solid argument yet against the affixes in (1) and (2) as encoding voice itself.

Without giving the issue much thought, I sometimes fall back on a term I learned during my former life in Slavic linguistics: *diathesis*. I was surprised to find no listing for this term in the indexes of Crystal (1992, 1997, 2003). Nor has this term proved to be all that useful in my conversations so far with Austronesianists. Still, a brief examination of this term's history has convinced me that one definition of *diathesis* is the right one for the Philippine languages. In fact, I had pretty much forgotten that Mel'čuk & Xolodovič are credited with resurrecting this term, drawing a distinction between it and *voice* as follows:

> Diathesis is a schema of correspondence between the syntactic structure's participants and the semantic structure's participants [...]. From here it is a simple transition to defining voice: [...] a f o r m a l a n d r e g u l a r m a r k i n g o n t h e v e r b o f a c o r r e s p o n d e n c e b e t w e e n u n i t s o f t h e s y n t a c t i c l e v e l a n d u n i t s o f t h e s e m a n t i c l e v e l. More simply put, voice is the grammatical marking of diathesis on the verb. (Mel'čuk & Xolodovič 1970:117 [expanded spacing as in original, translation mine/L.A.B.])

This distinction and these definitions have been picked up mostly by Slavic linguists: 'linguists who work on Slavic languages', 'Slavs who work on Slavic languages', and even just 'Slavs who are linguists'. I illustrate a sampling of the literature using one example of each of these definitions. To begin, Babby & Brecht (1975:364) define *voice* as "the relationship between a verb's subcategorization feature and the realization of this feature in the surface structure of the sentence." (Despite the term's singular morphology, the *subcategorization feature* is a defined set of nominals that are involved and the cases they bear.) Babby & Brecht argue that Russian has just one voice morpheme, to indicate marked diatheses, while Maranao has four markers of separate voices (1975:365, citing Mel'čuk & Xolodovič 1970:120). Next, Padučeva defines *diathesis* as "voice, not necessarily marked in the verb form" (Paducheva [sic] 2003:177) and uses Russian data to show that diathetic shifts can fail to effect a change in verbal form:

(3) a. Ivan   *razbudi-l*   menja   grub-ym   pink-om.
       Ivan(M).NOM   wake-PAST.M.SG me.ACC   rude-M.INST.SG kick(M)-INST.SG
       'Ivan *woke* me with a rude kick.'

    b. Zvonok   v   dver'   *razbudi-l*   menja.
       ring(M).NOM.SG   into   door(F).ACC.SG   wake-PAST.M.SG   me.ACC
       'The ringing of the doorbell *woke* me up.'
       (Paducheva 2003:179 [emphases as in original, hyphens added, interlinear glosses modified])

The idea in these Russian sentences is that both of (3a–b) are understood to have an Agent. In (3a) it is overt (i.e., *Ivan*); in (3b), merely implicit. In addition, there are nominals with the semantic role of Instrument in each: expressed as an adjunct in (3a) and as the subject in (3b). Russian has a so-called instrumental case used as in (3a) or in certain kinds of predicate-nominal constructions; this case also has a number of other uses following prepositions. In both examples, the subject happens to be masculine and singular; the verbs

thus happen to take the same MASC.SG agreement. The point of (3a–b) is that there is just one voice here but two diatheses. We needn't go into the fuller set of Russian diatheses and voices. As an example of a Slav who doesn't necessarily work on Slavic languages, Kulikov (to appear) provides us with a useful history of the terms *diathesis* and *voice*. The Greek grammarians used the former (i.e., *diathéseis* 'disposition') to refer to the morphological opposition between what is known in modern terminology as the ACTIVE and MIDDLE, as in English (4a–b), respectively. These examples are mine, and I've added the INCHOATIVE (also known as anti- or decausative) in (4c), discussed elsewhere in Kulikov's paper.

(4) a. Chris broke the window.
  b. These windows break easily.
  c. The window broke.

The Latin grammarians, Kulikov continues, adapted the concept of *diathesis* to the opposition between *active* and *passive* verbal forms, using the term *genus verbi* 'verbal class'. Another term used for this opposition was *vox* (as in *vox activa* 'active voice' and *vox passiva* 'passive voice'). This term eventually led to *voix* and *voice* in the modern Franco- and Anglophone grammatical traditions, respectively. Kulikov goes on to lay out the tenets of the Leningrad (later St. Petersburg) Typology Group, singling out Mel'čuk & Xolodovič (1970) as the Group's seminal work.[5] Kulikov also points out the sharp distinction between the original Greek usage of *diathesis* and its definition in Mel'čuk & Xolodovič (1970).

For languages like Maranao that attest four distinct verbal forms, as exemplified in (1) and (2) above, the terms *diathesis* and *voice*, as defined by Mel'čuk & Xolodovič, overlap for the most part.[6] There is thus no shortage of distinct verbal forms in languages of the so-called Philippine type. What linguists working on these languages need is a general term to describe changes in a predicate's argument structure that are not restricted to, say, active and passive. More importantly, a label is needed for affixes that not only promote and demote entities, but also either increase or decrease the number of such entities. For example, middles and inchoatives, as in (4b–c) above, subtract a nominal both overtly and in terms of understood participants. That is, there need not even be an understood Agent in (4b–c). Along the same line of reasoning, one might argue that the affix *-in* above in (1b) and (2b) encodes the obligatory understanding of two nominals, one acting upon another. (I am being careful here not to use framework-specific vocabulary.) What we need, then, is *diathesis* in the Greeks' original conception.

To broaden the discussion, it may be argued that Austronesian languages tend to express many properties of the predicate-argument structure in the verbal morphology. We have seen above how voice is expressed this way; other operations that change the predicate-argument structure include causative and reciprocal morphology. In this light, I might suggest that linguists—especially generativist syntacticians—look beyond the order of constituents to structures differentiated by morphology. For example, when looking at Austronesian analogues of binding (whether anaphors, such as *herself* or *each other*; pronouns; or referential nominals require an antecedent and if so, how close that antecedent

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[5] Kulikov cites Andersen (1994) regarding the early uses of these terms and singles out Shibatani (1988, 2004, 2006) as an Austronesianist who generally follows the recent definition of *diathesis*.

[6] One could argue that there are multiple diatheses associated to each voice under the assumption that the nominal expression marked as linked to a particular verbal affix can be from a set of semantic roles. For example, the affix *-an* in (1c) and (2c) can be linked to a nominal that is either a human being (i.e., recipient) or a location (in any of the senses of *where from*, *where at*, or *where to*). McKaughan (1958, 1962) uses *referent* as an umbrella term for all these. Thus, one might argue for four separate diatheses for the single voice signaled by the *-an* affix. Under the assumption that *referent* is a macrorole, then there is still a single macrodiathesis, as it were.

has to be in the syntax), syntacticians should also consider that in many Austronesian languages in and around the Philippines it is more natural not to use words (e.g., glossed with '-self') for anaphors but rather affixes on the verb. For instance, Carrier-Duncan (1985:12–17) discusses reciprocal word-formation rules in Tagalog that bind one argument of the verb to another. More work along these lines, linking up with the typological work represented by Reid & Liao (2004) can only enrich the field.[7]

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7 Carrier-Duncan's title agrees with Reid & Liao's position that Tagalog diatheses are derivational.

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